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STANFORD MEDICAL CENTER
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DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS
Professor Joshua Lederberg

FEB 2 1970

Dear Dr. Starr-

You are kind to take the time for such a pains-taking discussion of nuclear energy hazards, and I appreciate it very much. Might I suggest that the readers of Science might also enjoy an amplification of this overview (your letter of Jan. 28).

Let me rejoin only to your penultimate paragraph, about the Price-Anderson act. If it is "only a psychological goad" it would suggest that the utilities and insurance industries were incapable of an objective analysis of the economics of nuclear power, liability for 3d party damages included. It is also plainly irrelevant that nuclear insurance has not had to pay any claims to date: this would be an argument for reducing the premiums and increasing the coverage by private insurance sources.

It would be a "psychological counter-goad" to me if the AEC were to adopt 10% of the natural radiation background as the guideline for population exposure -- which many spokesmen claim will be met anyhow -- and short-circuit a lot of contentious argument about biological yield per rad at various dose-rates.

I am heartened by our agreement about the nature of the "gut issue". I would not, however, base policies in this area on ill-defined and sometimes irrational measures of utility in other aspects of public health. We are stupid not to spend more money to prevent auto accidents, but the funds are not likely to derive from savings on our electric power bills.

Let me know when we might all get together.

Sincerely,
Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.
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